

April 27, 2020

Dear Senator Coons,

During this time of great difficulty for the American people and for people around the world, it is important to look to the future for hope and reassurance. Leaders like you fuel that hope. **And so, it is with great pleasure that The Nature Conservancy presents you with our highest honor, the Conservation Leadership Award.** We present this award in recognition of your tireless leadership and co-founding of the Senate Climate Solutions Caucus and your ardent support for conservation. We applaud your determination to drive forward bipartisan climate solutions. Now is a critical moment for breaking through the gridlock and turning real solutions into law. Your pursuit of bipartisan strategies to tackle climate challenges and your continuous efforts to protect and enhance the Chesapeake Bay will ensure a more resilient, and more hopeful, future for the residents of Delaware and for our country.

We deeply appreciate your sponsorship, and co-sponsorship, of several critical bills for the environment. Your work on the Chesapeake Bay Farm Bill Enhancements Act of 2017 doubled funding for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program and created more opportunities for the agricultural community to benefit from that program. Through this effort and similar policies, your work has secured significant funding and resources that have dramatically improved the Bay's health and health and livelihoods of those who depend upon it.

Your contributions to land conservation, including your enthusiastic support for fully funding and permanently reauthorizing the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and your co-sponsorship of the newly introduced Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA), has and will continue to directly provide ecological, social and economic benefits across Delaware and the country. We are deeply grateful for your ongoing commitment to this cause. Some of my favorite pastimes include hiking the trails of Brandywine Creek State Park and First State National Park and birding at Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge. The LWCF protects and preserves these beautiful and valuable places today and for future generations. Beyond recreational opportunities, these places are home to a vibrant array of native plants and animals, provide us with resilience to climate change, and help deliver clean water and air that underpin the region's economy.

Lands conserved through LWCF also help safeguard our communities and infrastructure. Protected areas provide critical living laboratories, which demonstrate ways nature enhances human communities' resilience. These laboratories teach us how to adapt to rising waters caused by climate change and how to prevent the worst impacts of flooding. Preserving these areas reduces safety and economic risks to our communities and infrastructure.

Conserved lands also contribute billions to Delaware's economy; the outdoor recreation industry alone is directly responsible for 29,000 jobs which generate \$959 million in wages and salaries. This industry also produces \$3.1 billion in annual consumer spending in Delaware and generates \$145 million each year in state and local tax revenue.

Your leadership has been so essential to protect the lands and waters on which all life depends. We extend our sincerest thanks from all of our members, volunteer leaders and staff and we look forward to a continued partnership with you.

Sincerely,



Marika Steele Schoolar
Chair, Board of Trustees
The Nature Conservancy in Pennsylvania and Delaware



2020

Conservation Leadership Award

Sen. Chris Coons

Sen. Coons is honored with a
Conservation Leadership Award for his support
of conservation and his co-founding of
the Senate Climate Solutions Caucus.